

## MINUTES

### **CITY OF BEAUFORT PARK AND TREE ADVISORY COMMISSION**

March 12, 2015 3:00 pm

**Planning Department Conference Room, City Hall – 1911 Boundary Street  
Beaufort, South Carolina**

In accordance with South Carolina Code of laws, 1976, Section 30-480(d), as amended, local media were duly notified of the time, date, place and agenda of this meeting.

#### Members present

Barb Farris  
Jim Arnett  
Michael Brock  
William Waskiewicz  
Leah Palumbo

#### Staff present

Eliza Hill, Planning Department

#### Other attendees

Logan McFee  
Paul Brody  
Fred Leyda  
Barbara Chemsak  
Connie Hipp  
Pat Garrett

#### CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Farris called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

#### MINUTES

**Mr. Arnett made a motion, second by Ms. Palumbo, to approve the minutes of January 22, 2015 (visits to Wilson Park and the Hermitage easement). The motion passed unanimously.**

#### PUBLIC ART REVIEW: EAGLE SCOUT MEMORIAL

Logan McFee showed a diagram of his Eagle Scout project, a monument to fallen police officers. Consists of a 6' ht., 4-sided polished granite obelisk etched with the names of police officers killed in the line of duty in Beaufort County since 1776. He asked if it could go in front of the city court building in the middle of the sidewalk. 2 granite benches, located in the plant bed, will flank the monument on either side. Mr. McFee said he's nearly done with his \$20,000 fundraising, but the location is undecided. Chairman Farris told him she thought it was "a wonderful idea" and expressed admiration for what he'd done. He described in more detail where he would like it to go. Ms. Palumbo asked when it would be installed. Mr. McFee said he hoped it would be in May. The material has been ordered.

Ms. Hill described where they were thinking of placing the monument and said that the weight and method of installation could be an issue. Chairman Farris suggested looking at area requested for location at conclusion of meeting.

### **SOUTHSIDE PARK: COMMUNITY URBAN FARM PROPOSAL**

**Fred Leyda**, director of Human Services for Beaufort County said he would introduce **Paul Brody**. For 20 years, they have been developing programs that address various issues of life in Beaufort County – education, poverty, health, economy and environment – and “this is the first project” in that time that he has heard about “that addresses all of those.” Mr. Leyda said this is not a commercial farm; it’s “more of a petting zoo crossed with . . . a well-organized community garden,” but one that is structured and will employ people.

Mr. Brody said he’s the managing director of City Roots. Its mission is to create an environment where they can grow fresh food for people who need it. For every two tomatoes they sell, they will give one to the food banks. The farm will be developed in five phases. He said he would show a video of other successful urban farms of this type. Mr. Brody said Myrtle Beach has a wind turbine program, and people in the Southeast who want to find out about how that works go to Myrtle Beach, not elsewhere. There are no urban farms in Charleston or Savannah, Charlotte, etc. When people want to learn how to do it, they will come to Beaufort, which will be “the epicenter” of agro-tourism. Will Allen, who has a 3-acre urban farm in a very blighted inner city, has people come from around the world to learn how he does it, and Mr. Brody has visited with him multiple times.

People need this food and education about it, Mr. Brody said. This farm will

- Foster community involvement from volunteers in the community as a whole. Also, anyone in the community can come to the farm to buy food any time.
- Be transparent to anyone who wants to come to it.
- Use local sourcing – as much as possible that is needed will be bought from the community.
- Provide educational opportunities – An education greenhouse will show how to make and preserve the food or how to make a small greenhouse to supply a family with food.
  - Community health – The farm will work with the hospital to teach people how to eat well.
  - Doctors for Food program – A doctor can write a prescription for someone who needs to eat fresh food, and they will give that person a 25% discount.
  - They’ll give tours to school-aged children and any others who want them.
- Get food to those who need it
  - EBT program – Participants can run their card for \$20 and City Roots will give them \$10 more free.
  - Work for Food program – Those who can’t pay for it can rake for a couple of hours, for example, and receive food as payment.
- Promote energy conservation – By Phase 5, Mr. Brody said, “We will be self-sustaining,” with all solar electric and water from rainwater harvesting.

- Provide “eyes on the park” – Someone will be there from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. (when the park closes), 7 days a week.
- Be an agro-tourism draw – This is the biggest growing aspect of tourism.

Mr. Brody discussed some of the corporations and organizations that have given money to other urban farms. He showed some of the things the farm would be growing. Everyone will benefit from what they do, he said. Mr. Brody stressed that City Roots “will fund this on its own” and isn’t asking the City of Beaufort for any money. At the end of Phase 5, they will employ 26 people with a \$1 million payroll, with “local, sustainable, good jobs.”

Mr. Brody said this farm would be “made to look pretty.” There’s a 6’ wire fence around it, and there will be plants/produce grown on the fence. He showed PTAC drawings of what the farm would look like, as well as a hydroponic greenhouse, which he said could grow 80,000 pounds of tomatoes, 26,000 of which would be given to food banks. There are also plans for 70,000 heads of lettuce, an aquaponics program to produce 10,000 pounds of fish, vertical gardens in retractable greenhouses, an orchard, and year-round strawberry growing.

Mr. Brody said there are 2 dilapidated buildings at Southside Park now that they will rehab and make into an office and a farm store. There will also be berry patches. There will be 13 greenhouses in all. It will begin with 4 greenhouses in Phase 1, as well as some gardens and compost. Phase 2 adds raised garden beds, and “we keep on going until we have complete funding through corporate sponsorships.” A corporation like Kroger would sponsor a greenhouse or a vineyard, for example, and they would put the corporation’s name on it. They have a number of potential sponsors, Mr. Brody said, but they don’t have approval to name them yet. Some are local companies, he added.

Mr. Arnett asked if everything Mr. Brody has talked about could be done on 3.44 acres, and if there were a similar farm closer than in Milwaukee. Mr. Brody said there’s a City Roots in Columbia, “but it’s a smaller operation.” The bigger urban farms are in the North, which is why they would like Beaufort to be the epicenter of this movement in the South.

Mr. Brody said the city’s tree farm would be integrated into the City Roots property, and they would take over its maintenance and irrigation. He described where they would build a road into Southside Park from Southside Blvd, and said coming in will be “like driving into the country.” To alleviate traffic, he indicated a right-of-way on Talbird Road to create a gravel road with one-way traffic for a truck to go in and out once a day for deliveries.

Mr. Brody added that they would produce their own soil. He said the city’s proposed butterfly park could go along the outside of the fence.

Barbara Chemsak said she lives in Mossy Oaks and walks her dog in Southside Park daily. She said Southside Park is designed to be a “passive park,” and while she thinks the farm is “a great idea,” she doesn’t feel it belongs in the middle of a passive park, where children and dogs are “running around.” Ms. Chemsak thinks the farm is “not a good fit,” and though it’s a not-for-

profit, she believes "it's a commercial project." Local growers need to be made aware of this project, she said, because she doesn't think it's fair to them for City Roots to be able to rent 4 acres of city land for \$1 a year. She said she knows the city has been moving slowly forward with Southside Park, but she reiterated that City Roots' project "doesn't belong in a passive park." "Everyone I have talked with has said they do not want to see a commercial operation within this park," Ms. Chemsak said.

Mr. Brody asked, "If I don't do it, who's going to do it?" He said local growers don't give a third of their produce to local food banks, apart from what they might give when gleaned from the fields after the produce has been picked. Their intention is to give food to people who need it, but in order to be self-sustaining, they have to sell product. They can't run the whole project on grants alone, because that is not self-sustaining. There's nowhere else in the city, Mr. Brody said, that they could put the farm that people can access it. People can walk or drive a mile. People can't or don't drive 15-20 miles out to local growers now. Mr. Brody said he had spoken to Urbie at Pinckney's Produce, who said he knows people who get their produce from him now will continue to do so, so he has no problem with this project.

Mr. Leyda said Mr. Brody is "being a little humble. He has no intention of running this thing," and handing his "empire" down to his children. Mr. Brody's idea is to hand it all over to the community to run, not for himself.

Chairman Farris said PTAC would review the information as presented and discuss this at a later meeting.

#### **TREE REMOVAL APPEAL: 604 CENTER DRIVE WEST**

Pat Garrett said he had a "rebuttal" email he had sent to Ms. Hill when Ms. Hill had told him he couldn't remove 5 trees from an adjoining lot, which, he said, is "not overrun. I treat it like it's my yard." Chairman Farris told Mr. Garrett it's "a very nice yard," and she "admire(s) your efforts in gardening."

Mr. Arnett asked where Mr. Garrett's property ends, and Mr. Garrett said, "It stops at the mailbox." The adjoining lot "belongs to the neighbors. He does not take care of his like I do." Chairman Farris said there are the 5 marked trees Mr. Garrett wants to take out, and then to the left of them, there's another group of trees. She asked if any of these trees were on Mr. Garrett's property, and Mr. Garrett said he thinks the one closest to his house is on his property line, but he'd have to have a surveyor out to determine that.

Mr. Arnett said because Mr. Garrett had stated that he is concerned about the trees coming down in storms, he would support Mr. Garrett taking the pines out, but that would only leave the two cherry trees on the side property. Mr. Garrett said he intends to plant other trees there, and in the back, he already has planted fruit trees and a large magnolia. Mr. Arnett said he wouldn't have a problem with Mr. Garrett taking the trees out if he puts something back in. Mr. Brock agreed that Mr. Garrett should do that, and Mr. Garrett said, "We can do that. It's no problem."

Mr. Arnett said he should put back a tree like a live oak or a cedar that is "storm-steady." Mr. Arnett said Mr. Garrett could stay in touch with Ms. Hill and let her know when he has planted back. People say they will do it and then don't. Chairman Farris agreed. **Mr. Waskiewicz made a motion to approve the tree removal if Mr. Garrett will plant trees back "in an appropriate spot" in case the lot is sold at some point. Ms. Palumbo seconded the motion.** Chairman Farris said Mr. Garrett should mitigate one tree within 6 months. Mr. Garrett thanked the board.

#### **DISCUSSION: CITY PROPERTY DEACQUISITION LIST**

Chairman Farris asked the board if they had had a chance to drive by the properties listed by the city planning dept. as possibilities for de-acquisition. There was general assent.

**Annette Bryant Playground, 1807 Morris Street – R120 001 000 0147 0000:** Ms. Hill said it is next to Metz Field, the ball field owned by the county. There's a tiny playground in it with equipment from the 1960s or 1970s. It's very rarely used. Its city property, but it's managed and maintained by the county. If it were sold, rather than given, to the county, funds would be generated, which is what the city is interested in. The little playground immediately adjacent to Metz Field is Annette Bryant Park; it could be absorbed into Metz Field, Ms. Hill said, and the county could take it over, or Annette Bryant, if it's a buildable lot, could be sold for development. "It's the same sort of thing as Wilson Park," Ms. Hill said.

**Open Space at 410 Ribaut Road (at the northwest corner of Ribaut Road and North Street) R120 003 000 0288 0000 –** There is no deed restriction on this property like there is on the Open Land Trust side of this intersection; that side will never come up for deacquisition, Ms. Hill said, but this one will, possibly.

**Playground next to Mossy Oaks fire station (across the street from MO Elementary, just down from Beaufort Middle School) 2521 Mossy Oaks Rd; R120 006 000 0072 0000:** The city had done some improvements in that little playground "several years ago." It could be a buildable lot and generate revenue for the city.

**Calhoun Thomas (across from the bowling alley on Ribaut Road) R120 007 000 0390 0000:** The new fire station will be built next to the bowling alley, and Calhoun Thomas is right across the street. This is Open Land Trust property, and the centerpiece was given to the city, Ms. Hill said, so she's pretty sure it's owned by the city, "free and clear." Mr. Arnett said a corner of it has been cleared off, and there's a for sale sign that looks like it's for all of the property. Mr. Waskiewicz said he believes it is Open Land Trust property. Mr. Arnett said there's a for sale sign in the cleared off area. Ms. Hill said it's zoned residential. Chairman Farris said there had been talk about putting commercial in there. Ms. Hill said a medical complex was to be developed there, but the Spanish Point residents opposed it vocally, and it was halted. Ms. Hill said no one uses this park, the city pays to maintain it, and "it could be a money generator." Mr. Waskiewicz said he'd find out from Open Land Trust "what property they own along there." Ms. Hill said she will look it up on the GIS, and LA has spent a lot of time researching it.

Chairman Farris asked what Ms. Hill wants the committee to do in regard to these properties at this time. Ms. Hill said **Mayor Billy Keyserling** wants the committee to look at the properties and give their opinions on hanging on to each of them or letting them go, and then for PTAC to say, "The city should do one or the other because..." Council is looking for the advice and recommendations of PTAC.

Mr. Arnett said in regard to the long-range master plan, there must be plans to develop/create/build parks, and Ms. Hill said there are such plans. Ribaut Road, for example, in the Civic Master Plan has very different sections. The Calhoun Thomas area is "set for commercial development . . . without a doubt."

Chairman Farris said at the Mossy Oaks location, there's a playground, and it's close to another playground at the school. 410 Ribaut Road is "just a piece of property that we continue to maintain," and she personally sees "no reason to hang on to it." Chairman Farris also thinks it would be a good idea to ask the county to take over Annette Bryant Playground.

Chairman Farris asked the committee to look at the sites in the next week, and then email Ms. Hill with their impressions. Ms. Hill said that would work.

Chairman Farris said that the committee had gone to S. Hermitage and Wilson Park, and she wondered if that had been presented to council, and if so, what their response was. Ms. Hill said that information has not been presented to council yet. Ms. Hill said they had looked at Wilson Park, and *those* comments have been forwarded to council in a memo, as well as their comments about the public easement at S. Hermitage, but it's not been put on the agenda yet. When it is, she'll let them know.

#### **DISCUSSION: COUNCIL WORKSHOP 3/10 - SOUTHSIDE PARK FARM**

Ms. Hill said there was some opposition to the Southside Park Farm at the council work session. Ms. Palumbo said her initial thoughts on the idea are "positive," but whether it's at Southside Park remains to be seen.

#### **BATTERY CREEK VISTA**

Ms. Hill said the Battery Creek vista goes from Wendy's to the United Way building on Boundary Street. The city has proposed acquisition with Rural & Critical Lands and Open Land Trust to create an 8-acre park. The city and Open Land Trust are looking at the Sea Eagle Market, the old fire station, and Huddle House (which is vacant and abandoned, as is the old fire station). Sea Eagle Market is "entertaining the idea," Ms. Hill said. They are open to selling and relocating. So while they are deacquisitioning some parks, they are opening up others. Ms. Hill said they have been trying to negotiate with Wendy's, but they are going to reopen at some point. They haven't closed the door to the idea of relocating at some point in the future, however.

In regard to Southside Park, **Barbara Chemsak** asked what they could do to help. Chairman **Farrior** said all the meetings are open to the public, and the media is always notified. She will let Ms. Chemsak know when they are going to meet and talk about it. She said PTAC would like to study the plans. Ms. Chemsak said, "No one in the neighborhood was approached about this," and "no one knows about it." Once more people are aware of the presentation, there will be many more questions, she believes. There's been "no attempt at all to discuss this with anybody in the neighborhood," Ms. Chemsak reiterated, and she thinks there should be. Mr. **Arnett** asked Ms. Chemsak to get the word out to her neighbors. Ms. Hill said it has to be reviewed by council in workshop. If council says no to the lease, then neither PTAC nor the public will need to review. It will go public after it goes to a council work session. Ms. Hill said **Councilman Stephen Murray** had read the entire City Roots proposal and had some issues with it. If the property owner, which is the city, won't rent the land, "then there's no issue."

Mr. **Waskiewicz** asked if PTAC would be discussing it, and Ms. Hill said "more and more." **Connie Hipp** said there were a lot of recommendations that the Southside Park committee had made for the park. The former committee members would like to still be advisory on the matter of Southside Park. Ms. Hill suggested that they might have a work session about Southside Park, the Civic Master Plan, and the farm plans.

There being no further business, **Mr. Arnett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Waskiewicz, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.**